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# **News Release**

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## **Grand jury indicts defendants connected with indoor marijuana growing operation**

Nine defendants connected to what may be the largest indoor marijuana growing operation in Minnesota history were recently indicted by a federal grand jury. During the April 10, 2008, arrests, authorities seized more than 4,900 marijuana plants during the execution of 19 federal search warrants in the Twin Cities.

Indicted May 6 on one count of conspiracy to manufacture 1,000 or more marijuana plants were: Tung Nguyen, 34, Bloomington; Thin Do, 30, Bloomington; Nam Nguyen, 32, Roseville; Thuong Nguyen, 45, Brooklyn Park; Lai Pham, 36, Shakopee; Sonny Pham, 44, Eagan; Hung Le, 48, Maplewood; Christian Pham, 33, Brooklyn Park; and Tuan Dang, 31, Inver Grove Heights. The indictment was unsealed today following the arrests of Christian Pham and Le on May 19.

The indictment alleges that from August 2007 through April 11, 2008, the nine defendants did unlawfully, knowingly and intentionally conspire with each other and others to manufacture 1,000 or more marijuana plants.

"The multiple arrests, drug, and asset seizures that occurred in this investigation are attributed to the outstanding law enforcement partnerships between DEA, West Hennepin County Drug Task Force, Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Unit, United States Attorney's Office, and other participating federal, state, and local agencies," said Dan Moren, assistant special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration's Minneapolis District Office. "The efforts of this significant enforcement operation, orchestrated by the partner agencies, have dismantled a sophisticated indoor marijuana growing and distribution organization."

According to a DEA affidavit, police learned that Tung Nguyen was operating a marijuana grow operation at a Burnsville residence. Authorities began surveillance of the defendants in January 2008 and observed them in possession of supplies commonly used to construct indoor marijuana grow operations.

During the execution of search warrants in eight residences, authorities recovered marijuana plants, along with other evidence of marijuana cultivation. More than 2,300 plants were recovered at two Maplewood residences; more than 300 plants at one in Burnsville; more than 400 at one in Brooklyn Park; more than 100 at one in Coon Rapids; more than 700 at one in Inver Grove Heights; more than 500 at one in Lakeville; and more than 600 plants at one in Eagan.

At a second Brooklyn Park residence, authorities also recovered in excess of \$31,000 in cash.

If convicted, the defendants each face a potential maximum penalty of life in prison. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the DEA, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Unit, and the West Hennepin County Drug Task Force, with assistance from both the Northwest and Southwest Hennepin County drug task forces, the Dakota County Drug Task Force, the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Unit, the Minneapolis Gang Strike Force, the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation Division, the Minnesota National Guard, and the police departments of Burnsville, Bloomington, Brooklyn Park, Coon Rapids, Eagan, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Maplewood and St. Paul. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney LeeAnn K. Bell.

-30-

An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.